

YOUR REAL NEED ACTS 3:1-10; JOHN 6:32-40

INTRODUCTION

We greet you all in the name of our risen Lord and Savior, the One whose soon return we now await. There is no doubt that the past few days have been difficult considering the reason for the lockdown of cities and towns all over the nation (and the world). We identify with those who are affected in one way or the other, and further encourage that we all be patient as it is for our good. We thank God that we can communicate with quite a number of you, hence this midweek message. Let the lockdown be a period of intense devotion and seeking the face of the Lord. Who knows, God may yet look down on the anguish of the world and rescue us from this virus and other plaques to his own glory.

The questions that many people have asked severally are: Where is God in this situation? Has he travelled? Is he sleeping? Doesn't he see again? But as rational as these may be, let us not forget that men are not God.

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways,
and my thoughts than your thoughts - Isaiah 55:8-9*

*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord,
Thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end - Jeremiah 29:11*

It may well be that our expectations in this situation are not what God is planning for us, or seeing as our needs. Whatever it is, we can be sure that God is working for our good.

May we find his grace sufficient at all times and in all situations, Amen.

TODAY'S PASSAGES

The passages above are the portions appointed for today's Holy Communion service (for us, Midweek service). Acts 3:1-10 is particularly about a man who was healed at the temple gate called Beautiful. The healing done in the name of Jesus, came through Peter and John who had gone up to the temple at the hour of prayer! See how important it is to have set times for prayers! How sad it is that we have set meal times, which we cannot afford to miss but have no prayer times. Even where we have, we do not adhere to it.

The Lame Man

He was lame right from birth. This means that the man never knew what it means to walk on two legs or the things involved in walking because he never walked since he was born. His parents had to do all things for him because his legs were deformed. This involves taking him to toilet, bathing and cleaning all other mess around him, moving him from one place to the other, especially from home to the temple gate and back.

He had grown to know no profession but alms begging and was accustomed to that way of life. But he was a wise beggar. He begs outside the temple from those going inside. He sat each day at the Beautiful Gate outside the temple to have the best chance to receive alms from those entering the temple. He is not there as part of the worshiping community but as someone seeking charity from them. He became such an expert that once he sets his eyes on people, he knew what to

expect from each. Asking for money was all he ever did and all he could do. For him, money was all he could get at the temple gate!

Encounter with Peter and John

When he saw Peter and John that day, he thought he knew exactly what would take place and what to expect from them. He thought Peter and John also knew his expectation of them. It was a day like all the rest as far as he was concerned. He stretched his hand towards them and asked, expecting to receive a spare coin or two from Peter or John or both. Peter even heightened his anxiety by calling him to look at them! So the lame fixed his attention on them, still expecting to receive alms. But what did he hear from them?

'Sir, we do not have money (silver or gold) to give you. We however, have something far more important for you.'

Perhaps at this, the man looked away to some other people who might be more favorable than "poor Peter and John" who had no money to give

But Peter not relenting, declared:

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" - v6.

They then helped him by his right hand to rise, leap and walk into the temple, praising God. His feet and ankles received strength.

This was what the man needed: not money but an encounter with Jesus! This encounter brought about healing for the man. See how his location changed after the encounter - from outside the temple to praising God inside!

Note carefully:

The lame man thought money was his greatest need in his life. Even his relatives and those who go the temple regularly had convinced him to think this way. To him, he would be on that mat for the rest of his life. Therefore he didn't think of any other thing happening to him except may be, death!

But we see from the encounter that what he thought he needed (money) is contrasted with what he really needed (a touch by Jesus of Nazareth).

This man was not alone in having a wrong expectation or need.

Jesus and the People's Quest for Bread

In John 6:32-40, Jesus had provided lunch for about 5,000 one afternoon but the people didn't see that as a miracle enough to authenticate for them his identity as Messiah. So they returned to him the following day asking for another bigger one that is comparable with the bread from heaven that their ancestors received in the wilderness. For them, Moses did a greater miracle providing manna for the whole nation than Jesus' provision for only 5,000 beneficiaries. But the truth is that beyond the miracle, they were asking for more food (bread) – one that they will eat more than at a single meal. Their need was food – bread!

But Jesus corrected them that the bread (manna) they ate in the wilderness wasn't from Moses but from God. All their provisions were from God the Father, so there was nothing special about Moses' powers as far as that were concerned.

Jesus – the Bread of Life

Jesus saw them and knew they needed no physical food as much as the spiritual. He therefore went beyond that idea. The manna was a means of meeting their material needs, but there is bread that is able to do far more than that, bread that really is heavenly. The bread (manna) in the desert was really only a pointer towards that true bread. And this true bread is none other than Jesus Christ – the bread of life. He has come from God; the Father has sent him into this world to be a means of life for all men and women. He is the true bread from heaven that

gives life beyond simply day-to-day survival. What the people therefore needed in reality was Jesus – the bread of life: to believe that he is from God, that he has come to save them from their sins, to receive him and so have eternal life!

Jesus – the bread of life, gives life not only to God's people now, in a material sense, but it gives life to the world. The power of the true bread goes far beyond anything we can expect of ordinary bread – and even far beyond what the people came to expect of the miraculous bread in the desert.

Like the lame man, what the people thought they needed (physical bread) was not what they really needed (bread of life). Jesus had far more than physical bread to offer them.

What do you consider as your need?

What do you consider to be your need? What do you labor and cry for daily? Given the opportunity, which of your needs would you have satisfied first - food, healing, money, shelter, admission, job, marriage, deliverance, protection, etc? None of these is bad in themselves. However, note what Jesus says:

Matthew 16:26, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Matthew 6:33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

If you ever find yourself thinking, If I only I had more money, more food, more clothes, more business opportunities, more cars or more children, then I would be happier and my life would be much better, quickly remind yourself that there is something wrong with your thinking. The truth is, money isn't our greatest need, it wasn't the greatest need of the lame man, and neither was physical bread the greatest need of the crowd that came to Jesus. See how wrong we are in most cases! *Our greatest need is to have a vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ.*

You don't need more money, but you need more Jesus. Whenever Jesus is present in any situation or life, he provides all other things that are necessary for life and the situation. Jesus always possesses something of much greater value than we think or expect. And that commodity of infinite worth which he alone gives, is free for all who have faith in him. As he meets your needs, take time to meet the needs of others you come across.

CONCLUSION

The world is at the moment like this lame man, lying at the gate looking for help. All the world expects or needs is not anything more than a friendly hand, or help to conquer the corona virus disease. But God has something different, so much more to give us. The situation at the moment is not a matter of the physical life but the spiritual. And so what the world needs is Jesus Christ. If only we will hear, believe and trust him, he has a lot wrapped up for us in the name of Jesus Christ. If we find Jesus and live in obedience to his will, we will be made whole. Jesus healed the lame man whose expectation was money as a picture of the future healing and restoration of his people. God is offering to heal men and women and make them whole, mature, grown up and will complete it when he Jesus returns.

Meanwhile, Jesus is offering himself even now as the bread of life for you. But this offer demands a response of commitment by faith. As the true bread of life, Jesus invites you to receive him by faith as Lord and Savior. He wants you to be committed to him more than ever and be full of him just like eating ordinary bread. When we eat bread, it becomes digested and the nutrients absorbed into

every part of the body.

Draw near to him, believe and receive him today, feed on him continually and let his presence in you be evident by the effect on all that you do, say and think. He is all you need!

~~Vicar

15/04/2020